

St. Francis on Holiness

May 26th, 2020



May the sweet presence of Jesus and St. Francis be with you. Today, I awoke to find a tiny puddle of water on a picture of Jesus that was lying flat near the altar. Yesterday, I had taken things out of storage and was organizing them, things that needed to be set aside for later. I have a lot of things that are not necessary to this life. I started to reflect on that and also what my husband had hinted at last night before I went to bed....that I was too busy with things.

Well I resented that remark because I did pray my usual hours before I began organizing...and some of the things were his after all, or medical items that needed to be consolidated. You know how it is when you're moving...everything gets mixed up. Well I was un-mixing and I thought surely, he would be grateful for that and happy because it needed to be done. So, I got a little puffed up about it.

But then when I woke up this morning to that little puddle of water on the picture of Jesus that looked like tears on the Lord's portrait, I began to question if Ezekiel was right. So, I went to the bible promises and I opened to Jealousy. Uh oh that's not very good, jealousy always means that I'm getting into the world, disordered affections. Oh yuck, that is one of the worst readings for me next to Pride. I was immediately convicted and resolved not to let these things rule me, but get rid of more stuff. I also apologized to Ezekiel and asked for an absolution.

I fell into my usual deep pit when I don't live up to my calling. It's a nasty sink hole that pulls me easily into self-pity and despair. Then I heard the voice of St. Francis and I felt urged to pull two holy cards. The first was, "We are brothers in the same order." And here I was berating myself for calling myself a Franciscan. And then, "You are beautiful My Beloved, you are beautiful," which is what comes from the Song of Songs and what the Lord says to His Bride.

I had been crying for my failures and these two sweet cards brought me out of a dark and hopeless place. Then I began a dialogue with St. Francis whom I knew was present, "Holy Father, I can never live up to the way you lived. I had just read on probably six episodes from the Omnibus of Sources and of course they all were super, super holy. So, it was all fresh in my mind as I compared it to my life. So, I said, "Holy Father, I can never live up to the way you lived, I have already by my love of beauty done some things that are not anywhere near in keeping with your example and I feel very, very badly. How can I correct this?"

I heard him say, "Just keep doing what you are doing."

And I thought WHAT??? Isn't that what just got me into trouble?

He clarified it and said, "Arrange simple cells, places for the brothers and sisters to pray in, deny yourself superfluities, and spend more time in prayer. Beloved daughter, does it surprise you that you cannot live up to my example? Truly it is pride and lack of focus on Jesus that makes you want to be someone you are not.

My storm tossed one, you are exceedingly frail. You have been through many, many battles, now is no time to give up. Minor reforms and vigilance over avarice are what is needed. Besides, times are coming which will require even more vigilance."

And that's interesting because what I opened to this morning in the Omnibus is about how the brothers went out on the mission, in other words, they went to beg for morsels of food to feed themselves and begging is one of the Franciscan charisms that we haven't lived as a community yet. Ezekiel and I have been living it for 30 years but no one else here has so I thought hmm this could be interesting where are we going with this.

Holy Father, I feel so badly.

He lifted my chin, "Don't give up."

What do I do?

"Little choices in a better direction. You have people here who are happy to live with very little, they are precious gems inspired by the Spirit of God.

Let me explain something to you my little Clare. You are yet a child at heart, this is YOUR charism. The adult model of the order does not fit you. You were chosen for this job expressly because you are so frail and inadequate, so moved by various desires, falling many times...but always through His grace persevering.

Now Satan would like to make sport of you and cause you to believe you are unfit for this job. But did I not say the order would be reborn by simple youth that have no other example but the gospels and my unworthy example?

What I am trying to tell you my daughter, is that your inadequacies, are precisely what is needed in this time and season. Many will be inspired and surpass you in holiness and the rigors of penance, but yours is to love the little ways because you are incapable of anything else. Do

not let your heart be broken by these words, rather you should rejoice because “We” are making very great progress in spreading the gospel by your failures and His forgiveness.

You are truly a child at heart, that is why that little wall in your house is precious to us, with memorabilia from your life...holy rocks with messages on them, and wood and other signs sent to you to encourage you to keep going in times when you did want to give up. You and Ezekiel are very little indeed and you must not lament how God made you, but accept it graciously knowing that He will always bring forth beauty from your ashes.

Now you see, there are many who cannot resist chocolate. You are not all alone in this. Partly because your body craves it and partly because you are so little. This is not license for you to indulge, because surely the devils will mock you when you try to deliver them, they will say to you, “you have no power over us without the fast.” And in some rare cases that is true. But for the most part, you are not subject to them, they are subject to you and you have every right to throttle and deliver them when you speak in His name. It is not on your power that these disgusting creatures are bound, it is in His power, and you are His spouse so you have every right to use His name and expect results.

However, when there is a big job, spiritually that needs to be done, it is good for you to abstain, yes, but also do not rely on that, rely on who He is and the power of His name to do this job even while abstaining.

“Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord.”

“I want to get back to the essence of my message to you, this is an important point and I want you to fix this conversation in your heart. You are but a child, stay innocent and pure, shun the ways of man and do everything from a motive of pure love, of God and of your brother, not for any benefit that would come to you.

I want the world to know that they can still be pleasing to God when beset by weaknesses, if they act from the purest motive of love for God and brother. I want you to stop lamenting your child-likeness, and rejoice in the simplicity of who you are.

You were raised to be an adult, to fit into an adult society, to impress others as an adult, and you passed a major life test when you abandoned that and embraced the child within. You have no idea how highly Jesus regards this state of childhood. It is to Him a supreme goodness, that shines in sanctity. So, don't try to grow up and do incredible feats of fasting, unless the Lord gives you the mandate and the grace, for a specific season.

Rather deny yourself as you can, but work very hard at purifying your motives and loving your brother. The very act of loving your brother draws out sacrifice from you. This is pure

motivation...not the mistaken motivation to be accomplished at spiritual feats. That focus is vain and not pleasing to God.

When all is said and done, this is what I want you to remember, you are a child at heart and you will never live up to the great penances done by others, nor should you aspire to do so. I accept you into my order, just as you are Clare and to be truthful you are safer now than you were when you did fast six days out of the week.

You have had to come to terms with your great weaknesses and these have lowered you to yourself, which has contributed to the grace of humility. Should you be very accomplished at fasting and other penances, you would be vain and haughty.”

Yep I can see that.

But what about the time when I did penance and a boy was healed of cancer?

“No greater love is there than to lay down your life for your brother.”

So, shouldn't I aspire to such things?

“Is this what you want?”

I should want it, but I avoid such penances. Shouldn't I aspire and work towards this?

“It is within your will to do so. Little acts like that are greatly blessed by God if done with no other motive than to help another. It is not outside the realm of possibilities for you. Is this what you want?”

I would love to see a miracle happen as a result of something He gave me the grace to do. Yet I shudder at the thought of giving up my comforts. St. Francis I'm a mess.

“You have to come to terms with who you are and who you are not. The Lord knows what you are capable of...”

And I suspect it is much more than what I am doing.

“That is always the case, with every soul. What makes the difference is knowing who you are called to be and committing to that, with its pros and cons.

My message to you is simple Clare, and you are making it much more complicated than what it is. In short, do not be ashamed of your littleness, your weaknesses, and short comings, because He is using them to reveal His loving and forgiving nature to a generation of souls that are completely jaded on religion and God. He is supremely loving and forgiving and your transparency about how you recognize yourself is a great comfort to the rest of humanity that is just like you.

Of course, there are rare souls who excel at everything...but, what is their motive? Is it pure or is it worldly? Is it a result of their upbringing and pressures brought to bear on them in formative years? The Lord honors purity and this is what I wish for you to maintain and even grow in. In the meantime, your mess will give hope to others who have lived in their mess for decades and feel SO unworthy of God. This is a great lie from Satan, you are shattering this lie by your candid appraisal of self. When souls see what a failure you are, and see Jesus lifting you up again and anointing you, they see great hope...enough hope to get up and try again, knowing that their Savior is a loving God and He will come to their aid, they keep going.

Satan would have them throw in the towel and go back to sin and the world, but you have given them something to live for, God loves them just the way they are and if He can use you, He can use them, and that restores value and a desire to live, in their hearts. Satan worked so hard to make them give up, but your faults gave them hope to stay in the game.

This is why you are hated; this is why you are slandered and discounted. But what is that to you, you never wanted to be part of the 'beautiful people.' You tried that once and saw the absolute vanity of it. You have chosen the better part, to be little, hidden, and known only to God. Approved only by God.

This is what I want to tell the world, "Come as you are." If you have been touched by the gospel message and want to live a circumcised life, as Clare and the other souls have chosen, I receive you as you are, little and poor. Through your desire, Jesus will give the grace for each of you to attain the measure of holiness you are made to fulfill.

If you have been rejected by the establishment, all the better. If you truly know and acknowledge your limitations, but have a pure heart, you qualify. He will use you and I will welcome you.

Go now my little, little Clare, be at peace in who you are not, and if per chance the Lord should ask an extraordinary sacrifice from you for the good of your brother, do not calculate in your own terms, if you can do it, rather trust in His grace to do it. But do not go forth seeking to impress and satisfy yourself and the world with penances, rather be stripped of all self-interest and receive yourself just as you are.

When God calls you for something out of your ordinary ability, trust that He will do it through you with the grace He will give you.” And that was the end of St. Francis’ message to us.